

I join with my colleague from Idaho in saying Senator LIEBERMAN's statement is one of a true statesman, one we all ought to take to heart. I commend it and I will make that required reading for anybody who asks about this issue.

Three quick points. I was asked yesterday by the media why the drumbeat on Iran. Simple answer: Iran is providing the EFPs, the explosively formed penetrators that are killing more and more Americans. We have tried, by diplomatic pressure, to get Iran to stop. Now we have even caught a leader of the Quds Force, the Iranian elite special forces unit, that reports directly to the ayatollah. They are there. The Iranians' special forces are there.

Some say, well, maybe the top leaders don't know. But how many folks believe your special forces are going to go someplace, have the devices that only Iran can make, and the top leaders not know anything about it? That is why the drumbeat on Iran. We ought to take out the Iranian fighters and stop the weapons coming in.

Secondly, on this resolution, it not only downgrades General Petraeus and says that although we confirmed you unanimously, we don't believe in your mission, but it also says to our allies, the neighboring countries that have been brought in on this new strategy—a new strategy that General Petraeus is implementing—that they shouldn't bother to come in and help us stop the deterioration in Iraq, which could lead to chaos and a takeover, and it also says to the enemy we are not going to be there.

I am taking an intel trip and will not be here for the vote. I am strongly opposed to cloture on this. So by being absent, I will deny those seeking the 60 votes my vote, and I strongly urge my colleagues who are here to vote no.

IRAQ

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise to address the issue of the Iraq resolutions.

Tomorrow at 1:45, I will vote for cloture, and I do that for reasons that I will set forth. I, like many of us, have to leave early this afternoon. I have consolidated all my State obligations and speeches between now and late tonight so I may return for the vote.

I want to go back and retrace the history of this debate. When I returned from Iraq, with several other Senators, and Senator LEVIN with me, at that time I was chairman of the Armed Services Committee and he was ranking. I indicated to the Nation by way of a press conference that I felt the situation was going sideways; that our strategy was not working.

Initially, in the days following that, I was highly criticized for those remarks. Eventually, however, others began to recognize the situation as I had, and, indeed, the President, when he was asked publicly if he supported

the observations that I had made, said yes. I commend the President for immediately swinging into full gear his whole administration to study intensively the matters with regard to the current strategy. It included work by the Baker-Hamilton group, which I think played a very constructive role.

In the resolution which I prepared, with the assistance of Senator BEN NELSON and Senator COLLINS, we make direct reference to that. I bring up that background because the President then, on January 10, announced his intention to go forward with a changed strategy. The President, in that speech, specifically said:

If Members have improvements that can be made—I repeat—if Members have improvements that can be made, we will make them. If circumstances change, we will adjust.

Now, that was an open invitation to Members of Congress and others to address this very important plan laid down by the President. Our group, my 2 colleagues who worked with me, Senator LEVIN joining us later, and a half dozen others, some 8 or 10, up almost to 12, joined in an honest forthright way in accepting the President's offer. That is how this started. In drawing up our resolution, we were careful to say, yes, we had different views, but we urged the President to consider all options—I repeat all options—other than the utilization of 21,500 individuals to go into that situation.

Specifically, our resolution charges the Iraqi military with taking the lead, with taking the brunt. I reiterate, the Iraqis should be taking the full measure of responsibility for this Baghdad campaign. Therein rests this Senator's primary concern with the President's plan. I say that because our American GIs have fought bravely, courageously, and we have had sacrifice and loss of life and limb, and in no way have they failed in the attempt to try to help the Iraqi people achieve their freedom, achieve their Government through elections, and to become a sovereign Nation. Now it should fall upon the over 300,000 Iraqi troops, police, and other security officials to bring about the cessation of this violence in Baghdad.

The Iraqis are far better qualified by virtue of their understanding of the language. They have a far better understanding of what is it that is bringing about this sectarian violence. These are the very people we liberated and gave them back their sovereign land and who are now fighting themselves, Sunni upon Shia, Shia upon Sunni, with wanton murder and criminal activity. Our forces do not understand the language. It is hard for those here in this Chamber to go back and look at the origins of the difference between the Sunni and Shia, which go back some 1,400 years. Our troops shouldn't be in there trying to decide do we shoot at a Sunni or do we shoot at a Shia. That should be the responsibility of the Iraqi forces. That is the principal reason I found differences with the President.

Our leaders, the RECORD will reflect, have tried to reconcile the differences between our two sides. The last time I didn't support cloture. I did that to support the institution of the Senate, because this Senate stands apart from the House, and stands apart from legislatures all over the world because of the right and the freedom to debate and for all to bring forth their ideas. We are behind that now. So far as I know, the leaders have done their best and we were not able to achieve agreement, and now, procedurally, we are faced with the situation of a House resolution, which will be voted on in an hour or more, and will then be considered by the Senate. For that purpose, I will vote cloture.

We supported the President in our resolution. As I read the House resolution, it does not reject the President's initiative to have a diplomatic component to his plan. The House resolution does not reject the economic aspect of what the President puts in his plan. So I say to my colleagues that what comes before us does not reject outright the President's program. It directs itself to that military operation, much as we did in S. Con. Res. 7, and says respectfully that we urge the President to consider all options, options that were set forth in testimony before the Armed Services Committee by General Abizaid, when he said we don't need any more troops; by General Casey, when he was up for confirmation and he said he thought we only needed two brigades, not five brigades.

So it is against that background that I think our group has come forth in response to the President's invitation and stated our case in a very respectful way. This matter we will address, the House resolution, I do not believe rejects the entire plan of the President. The components of diplomacy and the components of economics are there. It is only the question of how we employ our forces. I say the burden falls on the Iraqi security forces.

I will submit for the RECORD a New York Times story which appeared this week outlining an operation in which we had 2,500 Americans and less than 100 Iraqi forces turned up to participate. I asked about this yesterday when questioning the Chief of Staff of the United States Army and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, as to what their idea of the plan had been, and it was represented to us that there were to be joint forces, a joint command.

Certainly this is an early report, and I cannot speak to the authenticity of the article, but I have invited the Department of Defense to comment on it. It indicates to me that the Americans are bearing the brunt, not the Iraqi forces.

I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Daily Press, Feb. 16, 2007]

WARNER QUESTIONS CREDIBILITY OF BUSH PLAN

(By David Lerman)

The Democratic chairman and former Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee questioned the credibility of President Bush's new security plan for Baghdad Thursday, citing news reports of an overwhelmingly American-led operation despite administration promises to let Iraqi forces take the lead.

Virginia Sen. John Warner, a senior Republican, used a committee hearing to call attention to a New York Times report that the first major sweep of the Iraqi capital under the new security plan used only 200 Iraqi police and soldiers, but 2,500 Americans.

Warner, who has warned against sending more Americans to combat a low-grade civil war, expressed surprise that the first major security sweep of Baghdad under the new plan would be conducted by so few Iraqi forces. Defense officials had stressed in recent weeks that U.S. troops would be deployed in phases over coming months—with time allowed to measure the commitment of the Iraqi government to beef up its own security.

"I was led to believe that as we moved out in phases, that things would be in place," Warner said. "This is astonishing."

Warner, who sponsored a resolution opposing Bush's planned surge of 21,500 more American troops, added, "That falls far short of the public representation made by the administration that this would be a joint operation and that Iraqis would take the lead and we would be in a support role."

Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., the committee chairman, said he was dismayed at the reported reliance on U.S. forces, saying it "runs counter to what we were told the surge would be and how it would be handled."

Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, described the new security plan as an Iraqi-led operation during an appearance before Levin's committee earlier this month.

"We will not be out front by plan," Pace said of U.S. forces. "The Iraqis would be the ones going door-to-door, knocking on doors, doing the census work, doing the kinds of work that would put them out in front for the first part of the—if it develops—firefight. Our troops would be available to backstop them and to bring in the kind of fire support we bring in. But it would not be one Iraqi and one U.S. soldier."

Instead, the security sweep that unfolded Wednesday in three mostly Shiite neighborhoods of northeastern Baghdad was largely an American operation, the New York Times reported from the Iraqi capital.

Gen. Peter Schoomaker, chief of staff of the Army, and Gen. James T. Conway, the Marine Corps commandant, told Warner Thursday they were not familiar with the details of the described security sweep. But Conway added, "It is counter to what I understand to be the plan as well."

The public criticism of White House war strategy by two of the Senate's leading voices on defense policy came as the House prepared to vote today on a non-binding resolution opposing Bush's troop surge. Senate Democratic leaders, meanwhile, announced plans to hold a rare Saturday session to vote on whether to consider the same measure after weeks of procedural wrangling.

While the largely symbolic resolution is virtually guaranteed to pass the Democrat-controlled House, the surge in troops is already under way.

Whether it succeeds in quelling the mix of sectarian and insurgent violence in Baghdad

as promised could shape public attitudes on Iraq far more profoundly than any vote in Congress.

At the Pentagon late Thursday, Pace defended the progress of Iraqi forces in providing more security. He cited an operation about three weeks ago on Baghdad's Haifa Street, in which the Iraqi army faced down Sunni insurgents, and another in Najaf in which Iraqi forces battled against a Shia stronghold.

"To date, in the operations that have taken place since the prime minister has announced that he wants to have a very balanced approach to the problem, his armed forces have done just that," Pace said.

Of the three Iraqi brigades scheduled to be moving into Baghdad, he said, two have moved in and the third is moving this month.

Mr. WARNER. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the remaining time between now and 2:05 be divided equally between myself and the Senator from Montana.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KERRY. I ask that I be given sort of a 2-minute notice before the division.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator will be notified.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Virginia whom I think has been unbelievably thoughtful, unbelievably patient and courageous in this effort. I had the privilege of traveling with him to Iraq, together with Senator STEVENS. I could see the thought that he was giving then to the ways in which he was visually perceiving that it wasn't working the way it was promised. There is no stronger advocate for our Armed Forces. There is nobody who understands the military better, having just finished a tour as the chair of the Armed Services Committee. I really think the administration should bend over backwards to listen to this Senator who speaks with a voice of great reasonableness. He is greatly respected in the Senate. I thank him for his courage, for being willing to stand up on this issue.

The Congress, all of us, come here with a new responsibility in a sense. The last election could not have been more clear. People all across the country registered their disapproval of the policy that was being executed in Iraq. In fact, the Iraq Study Group report was awaited with enormous anticipation by everybody as an opportunity to bring everybody together and think this through anew and find a way to get a legitimate, across-the-aisle, Republican/Democrat, joint effort in the best interests of our country. I regret to say that the best efforts of former Secretary of State Jim Baker; the former Attorney General, Chief of Staff of the President, Ed Meese; another former Secretary of State, Larry Eagleburger; a former leader in the United States Senate and moderate from the State of Wyoming, Al Simp-

son; and a former Secretary of Defense, Bill Perry—just to name a group of those who were on the Iraq Study Group—that their efforts were just cast aside. Every recommendation they made was left on the sidelines.

Today we find the President adopting a policy which runs counter even to the advice of his own generals. Rather than listen to the advice, they change the generals and they put people in who would pursue a different policy. General Casey comes back, General Abizaid departs, and the policy goes on.

This institution has a solemn obligation to vote on this issue. It should not be procedurally delayed, and it should not be played around with. The fact is, the American people asked us to accept responsibility for something for which we already have some responsibility because we voted as an institution to empower the President to be able to send troops to Iraq, though many of us who voted for that resolution never voted for the President to abuse the power he was given by ignoring diplomacy, rushing to war, and forgetting to do the planning that they had promised they would do.

Our troops have done their duty. Our troops have served with remarkable courage under the most difficult circumstances. They have a right, together with the American people, to expect that this Congress does its duty. That does not mean avoiding a simple vote. If you are in favor of sending the troops, you have an opportunity tomorrow to register that vote, say you are in favor, stand up and be counted; if you are opposed you should vote no—as the House will do in a short period of time.

Whatever procedural games are played on the floor of the Senate will never erase the perception by the American people of the responsibility that we ought to be exercising. They understand that this is the time and this is the place and they expect us now to execute our responsibility. We owe it to the troops. For all those who come to the Senate floor and talk about supporting the troops, responsibility for the troops, what would be fair for the troops, don't demoralize the troops—there is nothing more demoralizing, I will tell you, as a former troop myself, than having a policy that doesn't work; sending you out on missions which don't have the kind of purpose that you believe can succeed. You send these guys out in these vehicles, waiting to be blown up by an IED, knowing as they hold their breath that they don't have an adequately armored vehicle to be able to withstand it, and they go out and come back and turn to each other and say: What did we accomplish? What did we do? Did we secure a territory? Did we change minds? Did we actually hold onto some advantage gained by driving through a city in that kind of a dangerous situation?

Sending an additional 20,000 of our troops in the middle of a raging civil war is not a sensible policy on any

number of levels. I believe, as a matter of larger strategy, raising the stakes by sending 20,000 additional troops and saying at the same time, publicly, "This is it, this is our big move, if this doesn't work we don't know what," is an unbelievable invitation to those who make mischief to make more mischief. And what's more, the very people who keep saying, "Don't set a date, don't set a timeline," set a timeline on this very deployment because they have come to us and said this is only going to be for a few months. So they announce a timeline on the very escalation that they say is supposed to make the difference and advertise: If you are one of the bad guys, just wait those 3 months. That is what they can do, knowing it is only 3 months.

I think there is a smarter strategy. I think there is a better way to be successful in Iraq, and it involves holding Iraqis accountable and setting legitimate benchmarks for what they ought to be doing. It is incredible to me that some people on the other side would obstruct a debate on the most fundamental issue confronting our country today. We are sent here to be a great deliberative body, and they don't want to deliberate. They don't want to make a decision. They think somehow they can just walk away and avoid responsibility for voting on the question of this escalation.

The majority leader has said they will have every opportunity to vote on that in a short period of time. Every amendment they want to bring they will have an opportunity to bring. We can have, in the meantime, a real vote on Iraq.

Since the end of last month when we started talking about talking about Iraq, 60 American troops have died in Iraq. There is a fellow by the name of Kevin Landeck, whom I just learned yesterday was killed on February 2 by an IED. Kevin Landeck comes from Wheaton, IL. He was a member of a Ranger unit over there. I have a wonderful photograph, a digital photograph on my computer of Kevin and a bunch of his other troops standing on a stairwell celebrating Christmas. The Christmas stockings are all hanging from the stairwell. I am proud that our office—Mary Tarr in our office particularly—has led an effort to help send packages to those troops regularly. Our office sends them boxes full of goodies, at Christmastime particularly—the stockings.

Sadly, Kevin has given his life in the ultimate act of patriotism, a courageous young man, admired by his fellow soldiers. That happened during the time that we couldn't even debate this issue on the floor of the Senate, during a time that the Senate avoided its responsibility.

We have every right to expect that the people who were elected to protect Kevin Landeck and the rest of those troops get this policy right—for their parents, for them, and for all of us.

I believe the only way we are going to do that is, ultimately, to be able to

set a target date which gives the President the discretion to keep troops there to complete the training. What other purpose is there to be there? We give the President that discretion. We give him the discretion to leave troops necessary to chase al-Qaida. We give him the discretion to be able to leave troops necessary to protect American forces and facilities. What other purpose would there be, after 4 years, to have us there but to finish the training of the Iraqis and to provide an emergency buffer against Iran and others?

But you don't need to be on patrol in Baghdad, carrying the brunt of a civil war on a daily basis in order to provide that. You can be over the horizon. You can be deployed in garrison. You can be rear deployed. There are any number of ways to protect American interests in the region, and I am tired of our colleagues on the other side suggesting that a policy that clearly advantages America's position in the region, changes the dynamics, shifts responsibility to the Iraqis, and ultimately protects our troops is somehow a policy of abandonment. It is not. It is a policy for success. And it is to be measured against the current policy, which is an invitation to more jihadists.

Our own intelligence agencies are telling us we are building the numbers of jihadists. We are inviting more terror. The world is more dangerous. Iraq is less united. Iran is stronger. Hezbollah is stronger. Hamas is stronger. This is a failed policy, and when a policy is failing, day after day, leaders have an obligation to stop and get it right.

I believe that requires us to have a summit, bring the nations together to solve the issues between the stakeholders and ultimately resolve what our troops are powerless to resolve. A civil war is a struggle for power. We have to resolve that at the diplomatic and negotiating table.

So I strongly believe it is not enough for Congress simply to go on record opposing the President's reckless plan. Congress has an obligation to provide a responsible exit strategy that preserves our interests in the region, retains our ability to protect the security of the United States, and honors the sacrifice our troops have made.

Eight months ago in the Senate, 13 of us stood up against appeals to politics and pride and demanded a date to bring our troops home, to make Iraqis stand up for Iraq and fight a more effective war on terror. But while we lost that roll call, I still believe it was the right policy to put in place, to demand accountability, and to leverage action.

Now, I am more convinced than ever that a combination of serious, sustained diplomacy and the enforcement of benchmarks for progress by the Iraqi government, leveraged by a 1-year deadline for redeployment of U.S. troops, is the best way to achieve our goal of stability in Iraq and security in the region.

That is why I will again introduce legislation that offers a comprehensive

strategy for achieving a political solution and bringing our troops home within 1 year. We have to find a way to end this misguided war, and I believe this legislation is the best and most responsible way forward.

Let me emphasize that this strategy does not mean abandoning Iraq in 1 year: in fact, it gives the President the discretion to leave the minimum number of U.S. troops necessary to complete the training of Iraqi security forces, go after terrorists, and protect U.S. facilities and personnel.

This 1-year deadline is not arbitrary. It is consistent with the Iraq Study Group's goal of withdrawing U.S. combat forces from Iraq by the first quarter of 2008—it's consistent with the timeframe for transferring control to the Iraqis set forth by General Casey, and the schedule agreed upon by the Iraqi government itself. Even the President has said that, under his new strategy, responsibility for security would be transferred to Iraqis before the end of this year. It is the opposite of arbitrary. The President has said it, our generals have said it, the Iraq Study Group has said it.

Some say those of us who oppose the President's failed policy in Iraq do not offer an alternative—nothing could be further from the truth. This legislation offers a comprehensive military and diplomatic strategy that incorporates key recommendations of the Iraq Study Group—including many that some of us here have long been advocating—to provide us with the best chance to succeed: holding a summit with all of Iraq's neighbors, including Iran and Syria—creating an international contact group—enforcing a series of benchmarks for meeting key political objectives—shifting the military mission to training Iraqi security forces and conducting targeted counterterrorism operations—and maintaining an over-the-horizon presence to protect our interests throughout the region.

It is time for Iraqis to assume responsibility for their country. We need a timetable which forces Iraqi politicians to confront reality and start making the hard compromises they have resisted thus far. Instead, they are using America's presence as a security blanket. Americans should not be dying to buy time for Iraqi politicians hoping to cut a better deal. We should be working to bring about the compromise that is ultimately the only solution to what is happening today in Iraq. And Iraqi politicians have repeatedly shown they only respond to deadlines—a deadline to transfer authority, deadlines to hold two elections and a referendum, and a deadline to form a government.

Without hard deadlines, our best hopes for progress in Iraq have been repeatedly dashed. When Prime Minister Maliki took power in May, General Casey and Ambassador Khalilzad said the new government had 6 months to make the political compromises necessary to win public confidence and

unify the country. They were right, but with no real deadline to force the new government's hand, that period passed without meaningful action—and we are now seeing the disastrous results.

In fact, for 4 years now, we have been hearing from this administration that progress is right around the corner. We have been hearing the Iraqis are near a deal on oil revenues, that they are making progress towards reconciliation—but we still haven't seen any results.

That is why we must give teeth to the benchmarks agreed upon by the Iraqi government for national reconciliation, security and governance. Meeting these benchmarks is crucial, but without any enforcement mechanism, they are little more than a wish list. That is why this legislation supports the Iraq Study Group proposal to make U.S. political, military, or economic assistance conditional on Iraqis's meeting these benchmarks.

A deadline is also essential to getting Iraq's neighbors to face up to the realities of the security needs of the region. None of them want to see Iraq fall apart. That should be the basis for cooperation in stabilizing Iraq, and yet a sense of urgency has been lacking. This deadline will make clear the stakes and hopefully focus their minds on helping the Iraqis reach a political solution.

We cannot turn back the clock and reverse the decisions that brought us to this pass in Iraq and the Middle East. We cannot achieve the kind of clear and simple victory the administration promised the American people again and again even as Iraq went up in flames. But we can avoid an outright defeat. We can avoid creating the chaos we all say we want to avoid. We can avoid a victory for our adversaries by taking a clear-eyed approach to identifying specifically what we can and cannot accomplish in Iraq.

With a new Congress comes a new responsibility: to get this policy right. That starts with preventing the President from going forward with this senseless escalation. And it has to end with an exit strategy that preserves our core interests in Iraq, in the region, and throughout the world. Only then will we have honored the sacrifices of our troops and the wishes of those who sent us here. Only then will we have done our duty.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I think it is clear that the American people want the Senate to have a debate on this issue. There is no doubt about that. I very much hope that enough Senators, when we vote tomorrow, will vote to invoke cloture so we can do just that, have a debate. I think for the Senate to not vote to invoke cloture would be very irresponsible. I cannot for the life of me imagine why the Senate would not conduct that vote. I very much hope when we have that vote to-

morrow that 60 Senators, more than 60 Senators vote in favor of cloture so the Senate can address one of the most fundamental issues that I think is on Americans' minds.

I was going to go to Iraq tonight because I wanted to see firsthand what is going on. I wanted to talk to troops, talk to commanders. I wanted to talk to not only the American personnel but also the Iraqis. I wanted to determine, the best I could, the degree to which Prime Minister Maliki and the Iraqis are able to stand on their own two feet and do what they are supposed to do; that is, govern and run their own country. I am not going to go over tonight, obviously. I want to be here tomorrow and cast my vote so we can start debating. That is the right thing to do.

Based upon what I see in the newspapers, what I see on television, based upon the comments of my colleagues who have recently been to Iraq, I am very disturbed. To put it simply, Iraq is a mess. It is a mess because the United States, to some degree, started it by invading the country and opened up Pandora's box and got the Shias and the Sunnis and the Kurds all stirred up. Now they are fighting each other.

We did a good thing by toppling Saddam Hussein. That was the right thing to do. But we did not think through the consequences. We did not understand what we were doing as a country. We did not have an exit strategy. We did not know what the consequences of occupation would be.

Certainly, the United States, with its very superior Armed Forces, can very easily occupy Iraq—Baghdad. In fact, the occupation was probably a little easier than many people anticipated. But when you go back and talk to generals, talk to defense personnel, talk to analysts, they all—many of them, many of them are very clear in saying that they advised the Pentagon not to go ahead and do this until we knew what we were doing once we got there. It would be a big mistake, many said, to proceed unless we knew what we were doing.

Put simply, there was just no exit strategy. There was none whatsoever. I have read so many reports and quotes of so many generals advising us to not go into Iraq until we knew what we were doing that I am appalled, frankly, at how unprepared the United States was when it went in.

All Americans, if they have any second thoughts about that statement I just made, they, too, would be appalled if they would read those same statements. They are all in the record. They are all in the public domain. I strongly urge people to read them and look at them.

The key here, as has been stated by the Senator from Virginia, the senior Senator from Virginia, is: Can the Iraqis stand up on their own two feet? It is my belief that they are not standing up on their own two feet. Clearly, the continued civil war's death toll indicates that Iraq is not taking control

of the situation. There are so many reports that the Iraqi Army is unfit and that they are not doing the job. There are questions about how well it is trained or is being trained. Clearly the answer is, it is not being trained. They are not doing a good job.

My view is it doesn't make much sense to throw more troops, a modest number of more troops, at a failed policy. That is what it comes down to. The Iraqis aren't taking care of themselves, and if they aren't taking care of themselves, why should we take care of them? We have lost so many American lives, so many Montanans, young men and women who have been killed over there, and it makes no sense, in my judgment, to keep doing this.

That is why I think we should vote on this resolution on Monday and, secondly, why I think the resolution should pass. We should not continue a failed policy. I don't know very many people who think the policy is working. Most think it has failed. So let's, as the U.S. Senate, make that statement.

What do we do now? If it has failed, what do we do? I don't think anybody has a simple answer. There is no real silver bullet here. But I do think we need to give the Iraqis a set date and say to them: We are going to get out of here on this set date, and you need to know that. My fear is, if we don't do that, they are just going to keep thinking the United States is going to keep sending more troops and keep taking care of them. It is human nature for them to do so, to think that. That is why I believe we should give them a definite date we will start bringing our troops home.

I also think we have to engage other countries in the region. We are not doing a good job of doing that. This administration says: Well, we can't talk to Iran; we shouldn't do that. We can't talk to Syria; we shouldn't do that. I don't understand that. It seems to me, if you want a solution, you have to talk to people. You have to talk to people who are involved. We are talking to the Saudis, we are talking to the Jordanians, the Israelis, and others in the region. That is good. But two very key players are Iran and Syria.

In life, we talk to our friends, but we should also talk to our enemies. We don't have to agree with our enemies, but we should talk to them. When you start talking to people with whom you have disagreements, after a while you learn there may be a common assumption or two. After a while you might learn something that indicates there is progress. There might be a little bit of daylight once you start talking to somebody. You certainly aren't going to learn anything unless you talk to them. The stakes are so high and the consequences are so great, I strongly urge the administration to start talking to people. So what if the public policy was that we were not going to do that in the past. Don't be stubborn. Don't be too proud. Do what is right.

Just try to talk to the people in the region so we can find some common solutions.

I know it is not going to be easy. It will be very difficult. But I know of no other alternative—no other alternative—but to give them a date and say: we are out of here; by this certain date we are going to start repositioning troops elsewhere in the region. We should tell them that so they sober up more—not just Prime Minister Maliki but the other principals in the country—and realize they have to start getting their act together. As I said, we need to have some very serious negotiations with groups in the region and also with countries in the region so we can manage the situation as best we possibly can.

This is one of the most serious issues I have confronted since I have been in the Senate in the last several years, and I commend my colleagues for addressing it so seriously. It is the right thing to do. But it is also the right thing to do to start debating this issue in the Senate. I think we will be doing the country a great service if we do.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WEBB). The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I ask unanimous consent that for the next 30 minutes, I be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes and that Senator KYL be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes and Senator THOMAS be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IRAQ

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise today to oppose the resolution, S. 574, the Senate will vote in relation to tomorrow. This resolution states simply that:

No. 1, Congress and the American people will continue to support and protect the members of the United States Armed Forces who are serving or who have served bravely and honorably in Iraq; and No. 2, Congress disapproves of the decision of President George W. Bush announced on January 10, 2007, to deploy more than 20,000 additional U.S. combat troops to Iraq.

Mr. President, the first paragraph of that resolution is a commendable one and one every Member of this body should support, and will. However, the second paragraph is simply inconsistent with a vote every Member has already made and should be opposed by every Member of this body. Therefore, the resolution as a whole should be opposed.

Exactly 3 weeks ago, on January 26, the Senate unanimously approved GEN David Petraeus for his fourth star and to be commander of multinational forces in Iraq. No Senator opposed his nomination. In my 12 years in the Con-

gress, I do not think I have seen Members of Congress express any higher confidence or support for a nominee for any position than they have for GEN David Petraeus. I have not heard anyone criticize him, and rightly so.

In his nomination hearing, when asked about his opinion of the President's plan for Iraq that he now has the responsibility of executing, General Petraeus said:

I believe this plan can succeed if, in fact, all of those enablers and all the rest of the assistance is in fact provided.

General Petraeus supports this plan. Now, the same Senate that voted unanimously to confirm General Petraeus is going to vote on whether they agree with the plan he supports and that they confirmed him to execute. That vote has not been taken yet, so obviously we don't know the outcome.

Some people would like to mislead the American people into thinking that Republicans are opposed to debating Iraq and the various resolutions in Iraq. In fact, Republicans welcome that debate, and that is why many of us are here today. However, Republicans rightfully oppose the Democrats' dictating what resolutions can be considered.

If Senators truly disapprove of this decision, they should be willing to vote for or against a resolution that clearly expresses their convictions, and that is exactly what Senator GREGG's resolution does. However, Democrats are not willing to do that. Senator GREGG's resolution expresses the sense of the Congress that:

No funds should be cut off or reduced from American troops in the field which would result in undermining their safety or ability to complete their assigned missions.

If Senators truly do not support the mission we are sending General Petraeus and our men and women in uniform to carry out, then they should be willing to have an up-or-down vote on the Gregg resolution.

For the record, let me restate my position on the proposed troop increase. Several weeks ago, President Bush addressed the situation in Iraq before the American people, and everyone was anxious to hear his plans for a new strategy. It is clear that Americans want a victory in Iraq; however, they do not want our presence there to be open-ended. I agree, and most importantly, I believe it is time for the Iraqi Government to step up and take responsibility. They need to take control of their country, both militarily and politically. I believe the Iraqis must deliver on their promises.

I come from a strong and proud military State, home to 13 military installations, and our service men and women have answered the call of duty and performed courageously. No one questions our troops' performance and unwavering commitment, and we will continue to support them. Many of our troops, including the 3rd Infantry Division based at Fort Stewart, GA, and

Fort Benning, GA, are preparing to head overseas, some for their third tour of duty in Iraq, as we speak today.

The President's decision to send additional combat brigades to Baghdad and Anbar Province in western Iraq is aimed at defeating the insurgency in those areas and increasing stability for the Iraqi people. However, we must also see an increased commitment from the Iraqis. This is also part of the new strategy, and I am committed to holding the administration and the Iraqis accountable in this area. Those of us in Congress have a responsibility to ask questions and seek answers on behalf of the American people when our strategy and tactics are not getting the job done.

I have expressed my concern and frustration with progress on the part of the Iraqis not only to the President and the White House advisers but to our military leadership testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee as well. In my conversations with the White House and with the Department of Defense leadership, I have made it clear that my support of any increase in troops is conditioned upon those troops being sent on a specific mission and upon the completion of that mission that they should be redeployed.

I firmly believe that just a large increase in troops without having a specific mission will only increase insurgent opposition and that a withdrawal of U.S. forces at this time would be detrimental to Iraq's security and extremely dangerous for American soldiers. That particular issue has been affirmed by every single individual in the U.S. military testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Failure in Iraq will result in expanded and intensified conflict in the Middle East, and that kind of instability is clearly not in the best interests of America or the international community.

Now that the President has taken serious steps to admit his mistakes, take responsibility, and revise the strategy, Americans do seek positive results. It has been said by many of my colleagues, as well as many of my own constituents, that the situation in Iraq requires a political and not a military solution. I strongly agree with that position. However, it is not possible, in my opinion, to have a political solution or to make political progress if citizens are afraid to leave their homes for fear of being shot or kidnaped or if they are afraid to let their children go to school because it is unsafe to do so. Some level of order and stability must be in place before a political solution can take hold.

In America, we take order and stability for granted because we are blessed to live in a country that is extremely safe, secure, and stable. However, Iraq is not the same as the United States. They do not live in a secure and stable society, and order and stability must be in place before there can be